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Book Review: *Remaking the North American Food System: Strategies for Sustainability* Edited by C. Clare Hinrichs and Thomas A. Lyson

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Remaking the North American Food System: Strategies for Sustainability. Edited by C. Clare Hinrichs and Thomas A. Lyson. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007. 370 pp. Figure, tables, maps, notes, references, index. \$45.00 cloth, \$29.95 paper.

Today's food system is in need of remaking, to be sure. There is a sense that we have lost our way, as food-related

health problems, environmental destruction, and food insecurity call into question the very premises of our contemporary food system. *Remaking the North American Food System* provides an excellent inventory and assessment of the ways in which people are working to solve these problems in different places and within different modalities. It draws on the vast experience of a number of the key experts in the world of alternative food systems, many of whom are pioneers in the field.

Ranging from assessments of on-the-ground practices to theories of politics and social movements, the chapters provide useful background and detail on a wide scope of alternative food institutions, including farmers' markets, food policy councils, local food initiatives, and ecolabels. Many of the authors focus both on the ways in which communities can work to strengthen food systems and also the ways local food systems can strengthen communities. In so doing, the book is an apt legacy to the concept of civic agriculture developed by coeditor Lyson, who passed away before the volume was complete.

The chapter by Stevenson, Ruhf, Lezberg, and Clancy provides an excellent overview of the ways in which actors can work toward food system change—through challenging and resisting the rules and practices of the dominant food system, reconstructing the food system through new kinds of activities, and creating networks and improving communications among different sectors of the food system. All the book's chapters address one or more of these forms of engagement.

Ostrom and Jussaume's chapter on community supported agriculture (CSA), for example, illustrates the ways in which one type of initiative is working at all three levels. While it focuses primarily on building a new economic model and creating connections, it also challenges at a deep level the premises and practices of the dominant food system. Similarly, the chapter by Carro-Figueroa and Guptill demonstrates the ways in which the various forms of farmers' markets in Puerto Rico serve different groups and have different outcomes.

Taken as a whole, the book highlights the importance of coeditor Hinrich's call for "continual shared learning" in order to create substantial and sustainable change in the food system. It offers both celebration and caution. The book certainly shines a light on the promise and possibility of food-system alternatives, but it is not sanguine. A number of the 19 chapters point out challenges and offer suggestions for improving existing efforts and recommendations for future directions.

While some of the authors emphasize the importance of place in remaking the food system, this book has some-

thing to offer everyone, regardless of locale. Whether looking for alternatives to large-scale commodity agriculture or seeking to improve food access for underserved people, *Remaking the North American Food System* is useful to practitioners and academics alike as they work to better understand the context and possibilities for creating a better food system. **Patricia Allen**, *Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems, University of California, Santa Cruz*.